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ABSTRACT

This information sheet presents 20 facts on women workers in 1989: (1) 56 million women 16 years of age and over are working or looking for work; (2) 69 percent of all women 18 to 64 years of age are in the civilian labor force; (3) most women workers are employed full time; (4) the average women worker spends 29.3 years of her life in the labor force; (5) women account for 45 percent of the civilian labor force; (6) labor force participation rates are equal among Black, White, and Hispanic women; (7) women continue to predominate in traditionally female occupations; (8) the unemployment rate for all women is 5.4 percent; (9) most women work because of economic need; (10) wives in the labor force contribute substantially to family income; (11) more educated women are more likely to seek employment; (12) median income for full-time female workers is $17,606; (13) the median income of full-time, female high school graduates is $16,810; (14) women are still concentrated in low-paying jobs; (15) women are choosing to be entrepreneurs; (16) 65 percent of women with children under age 18 work; (17) 33 million children under age 18 have working mothers; (18) women make up 62 percent of all people 16 years old and over with poverty-level income; (19) women maintain 53 percent of all poor families; and (20) women are maintaining an increasing proportion of all families. (NLA)

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Facts on Working Women

U.S. Department of Labor
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20 FACTS ON WOMEN WORKERS

1. Fifty-six million women 16 years of age and over were working or looking for work in 1989. Ten years earlier, about 44 million women were in the civilian labor force. Women accounted for more than three-fifths (62 percent) of the increase in the civilian labor force since 1979--11.8 million women compared with 7.1 million men.

2. In 1989, 69 percent of all women 18 to 64 years of age, or 53.1 million women, were in the civilian labor force compared with 88 percent of all men in this age group. Fifty-seven percent of all women 16 years of age and over were labor force participants. Participation was highest among women 35 to 44 years of age; 76 percent of women in this age group were in the labor force.

3. Most women workers are employed full-time. About 14 million or 26 percent of all women workers held part-time jobs (less than 35 hours a week) in 1989. Eighty-six percent of part-time women workers were employed on a voluntary basis. Just over two-thirds (68 percent) of all part-time workers were women.

4. The average woman worker 16 years of age between 1970-80 could expect to spend 29.3 years of her life in the labor force, compared with 39.1 years for a 16-year-old man. White and black women could expect to spend 29.6 years and 27.8 years, respectively, of their lives in the labor force.

5. Women accounted for 45 percent of all persons in the civilian labor force in 1989. Among these, half of all black workers were women; 45 percent of all white workers were women; and 40 percent of all Hispanic origin workers were women.

6. The influx of women into the labor force during the 1970's and early 1980's has resulted in nearly equal labor force participation rates among black women, white women, and women of Hispanic origin. In 1989, 58.7 percent of black women (6.8 million), 57.2 percent of white women (47.4 million), and 53.5 percent of Hispanic origin women (3.7 million) were in the labor force. In 1986, for the first time, 50 percent of working age Hispanic origin women were in the labor force.

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7. Women continue to constitute large proportions of workers in traditionally female occupations. In 1989 women represented 80 percent of all administrative support (including clerical) workers, but only about 9 percent of all precision production, craft, and repair workers. Women were 68 percent of all retail and personal services sales workers, but only 40 percent of all executives, managers, and administrators. There were 18,983 women working as apprentices at the end of 1989, representing 7.2 percent of all apprentices.

8. The unemployment rate for all women in the labor force was 5.4 percent in 1989; for women 20 years of age and over, it was 4.7 percent. Despite reduced population, teenagers, especially blacks and Hispanics, experienced very high unemployment rates.

1989 UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

Teenagers (16-19 years)	Rate	Adults (20 years of age and over)	Rate
Black women	33.0	Black women	9.8
Black men	31.9	Black men	10.0
Hispanic women	18.2	Hispanic women	8.0
Hispanic men	20.2	Hispanic men	6.6
White women	11.5	White women	4.0
White men	13.7	White men	3.9

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, January 1990.

9. Most women work because of economic need. The majority of women in the labor force (58.5 percent) in March 1988 were either single (25 percent), divorced (12 percent), widowed (4 percent), separated (4 percent), or had husbands whose annual 1987 earnings were less than $15,000 (13.5 percent).

10. Wives in the labor force contribute substantially to family income. In March 1988, 56 percent of married couple families had wives in the paid labor force as compared with 40 percent in March 1972. In 1988 the median income of married couple families with the wife in the paid labor force was $42,709 compared with $27,220 for those without the wife in the paid labor force. Women who maintain families have the lowest median family income ($15,346).

11. The more education a woman has, the greater the likelihood she will seek employment. Among women 25 to 54 years of age with 4 or more years of college in March 1988, 81 percent were in the labor force. Among women of the same age group with less than 4 years of high school, only 51 percent were in the labor force.

12. Median earnings for women who worked year round, full time in 1988 was $17,606. The comparable figure for men was $26,656. White women earned $17,819, black women earned $16,538, and women of Hispanic origin earned $14,845.

1988 MEDIAN EARNINGS
YEAR-ROUND, FULL-TIME WORKERS

All women	$17,606	All men	$26,656
White women	17,819	White men	27,228
Black women	16,538	Black men	20,371
Hispanic women	14,845	Hispanic men	17,851

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Money Income and Poverty Status of Families and Persons in the United States: 1988 (Advance data from the March 1989 Current Population Survey).

13. The median income of female high school graduates (with no college) working year round, full time in 1988 was somewhat lower than that of fully employed men who had completed less than 8 years of elementary school--$16,810 and $17,190 respectively. In 1988 women with 4 years of college education had a median income slightly below that of men who had only a high school diploma--$25,187 and $26,045, respectively.

14. Women are still heavily concentrated in low paying jobs. Thus, the average woman earns 70 cents for every dollar earned by the average man when 1989 median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers are compared. The five most lucrative occupations for women are: lawyers; engineers; mathematical and computer scientists; physicians; and c ations and systems researchers and analysts.[1]

15. More women are choosing to be entrepreneurs--starting their own businesses. The number of women-owned businesses in the United States rose from 2.5 million in 1980 to 4.1 million in 1986. Women's share of all nonfarm sole proprietorships rose from nearly 26 percent in 1980 to 30 percent in 1986.

16. The 33 million women with children under the age of 18 had a labor force participation rate of 65.0 percent in March 1988. Fifty-six percent or 8.9 million mothers with preschoolers (children under age 6) were labor force participants in March 1988.

17. Of the 58 million children under age 18 in the United States in March 1988, nearly 33 million (56.2 percent) had working mothers. About 9.5 million children under age 6 (47.5 percent of 19.8 million) had working mothers.

18. In 1988 women represented 62 percent of all persons 16 years old and over with poverty level incomes. The poverty rate of all families maintained by women with no husband present was 33.5 percent; for those families maintained by women with children under age 18, the poverty rate was 44.7 percent. There were 3.6 million families maintained by women (no husband present) that had incomes below the poverty level.

[1] Excludes any occupation where the female base is less than 50,000.

19. Women maintained 53 percent of all poor families in 1988. They maintained 76 percent of poor black families, about 48 percent of poor Hispanic origin families, and 44 percent of poor white families.

20. Women are maintaining an increasing proportion of all families (16.9 percent in 1989). In black families, women maintained 45 percent; in Hispanic origin families, 23 percent; and in white families, 13 percent. Nearly two-fifths (39 percent) of the 14 million increase in family households between 1969 and 1989 was attributable to families maintained by women. In contrast, between 1940 and 1960, families maintained by women accounted for only 8 percent of the increase in the number of families.

FAMILIES MAINTAINED BY WOMEN, 1989

	Number of Families	Percent of Families	Median Weekly Earnings
Total[1]	10,997,000	16.9	$ 347
White	7,425,000	13.3	363
Black	3,254,000	44.6	303
Hispanic	1,095,000	22.8	337

[1]Components will not total because data for the "other races" groups are not presented separately and Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment and Earnings," January 1990.

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